United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General presents An Agenda for Development, saying development is main United Nations activity and prerequisite for peace; advocates universal culture of development, based on peace, economic growth, environmental protection, social justice and democracy.

+ Security Council meets to take action on draft resolution ending mandatory arms embargo and other measures against South Africa.

+ Secretary-General describes international response to Rwanda crisis as a scandal and a failure; says genocide has been committed while international community has been discussing what to do.

+ Terje Roed Larsen of Norway appointed as Special Coordinator in occupied territories, effective 1 June; to oversee United Nations activities and support implementation of Declaration of Principles.

+ Secretary-General recommends that Security Council extend UNDOF mandate for six months; says situation in Middle East remains potentially dangerous despite calm in Israel-Syria sector.

+ Special Envoy Caputo and United States official travel to Dominican Republic to discuss Haiti sanctions and border between two countries.

+ At final session, Committee on Information approves draft resolutions on integration of information centres with UNDP field offices and on increase in Committee's membership.

+ Speakers at World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction stress need for disaster prevention and preparedness strategies.

+ IAEA says reports that nuclear material is unaccounted for at Japan's Tokai Nuclear Fuel Fabrication Plant are incorrect; material in question has been declared and is fully safeguarded.

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For information media—not an official record

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today launched his report "An Agenda for Development", saying he wished to counter the perception that the United Nations was focusing too much on peace-keeping operations. In a press conference at Headquarters, he noted that the Organization spent $3.6 billion each year on development, compared with $2 billion on peace-keeping. He stressed that development was a prerequisite for peace, and that it was the main activitiy of the United Nations.

An Agenda for Development -- a counterpart to An Agenda for Peace -- warns that the world may be paying insufficient attention to development amid new problems in the wake of the cold war. It calls for a universal, human-centred "culture of development", built on the foundations of peace, economic growth, environmental protection, social justice and democracy. Without peace, human energies cannot be productively employed, it says. Without economic growth, there can be no broad-based improvement in material well-being; without protection of the environment, human survival will be threatened; without societal justice, inequalities will undermine social cohesion; and without political participation in freedom, development will always be at risk.

"Absolute poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy are the lot of one-fifth of the world's population", the Secretary-General says. "There can be no more urgent task for development than to attack both the causes and the symptoms of these ills."

The Agenda will be the subject of the 6 to 10 June "World Hearings on Development", organized by General Assembly President Samuel Insanally and will later be considered by the Economic and Social Council. The Secretary-General will present his final conclusions and recommendations on the Agenda during the Assembly's next session, which will begin in September.

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The Security Council met this evening to take action on a draft resolution which would terminate the mandatory arms embargo and other measures against South Africa contained in various Council resolutions. The draft would also dissolve the Council Committee on the question of South Africa.

By the draft, the Council would welcome South Africa's first all-race multi-party election, which took place last month, and the establishment of a united, democratic, non-racial South African Government. The draft stressed the urgent need to facilitate the country's reintegration into the international community, including the United Nations system.

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At his press conference at Headquarters today, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described the international community's response to the situation in Rwanda as a scandal and a failure. He said genocide had been committed there, but the international community was still discussing what should be done. The Secretary-General said he had begged various Heads of

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States to send peace-keeping troops to Rwanda, but without success. To date, only Ethiopia, Ghana and Senegal had officially confirmed that they would contribute troops to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).

Meanwhile, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Operations, Iqbal Riza, and the Secretary-General's Military Adviser, General Maurice Baril, today met with representatives of the Rwandan Government in a town 40 kilometres south-west of Kigali. They then returned to the capital, and were expected to meet again with the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), according to the Secretary-General.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today announced the appointment of Terje Roed Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator in the occupied territories, effective 1 June. Ambassador Larsen played an important role in facilitating the talks between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which led to the signing of the Declaration of Principles last year and to this month's agreement on Gaza and Jericho.

The Secretary-General said Ambassador Larsen would be a focal point for United Nations economic, social and other activities in the occupied territories. He would guide United Nations programmes and agencies operating there so as to ensure an integrated and unified approach to economic and social development. As requested by the parties, he would also support the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The Secretary-General added that Ambassador Larsen had a deep knowledge of the area, excellent contacts with the parties, and expertise in the economic and social fields.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) be extended for six months until 30 November, saying that the situation in the Middle East remains potentially dangerous despite the present calm in the Israel-Syria sector. In a report to the Security Council dated 22 May, he noted that both countries had assented to the proposed extension.

UNDOF was established in 1974 to supervise the cease-fire called for by the Council and the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces. In the last six months, it has performed its functions effectively with the cooperation of the parties, according to the Secretary-General. The Force Commander has maintained close contact with Israeli and Syrian military liaison staffs, supervised the area of separation, conducted regular inspections of force levels in the areas of limitation, and assisted the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The Secretary-General noted that the General Assembly had authorized commitments for UNDOF of up to $2.7 million gross per month for the six months from 1 June. He also noted that unpaid assessments to the UNDOF special account totaled some $21 million as of 27 April.

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The Special Envoy of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), Dante Caputo, and United States Special Envoy William Gray are travelling to the Dominican Republic for consultations with the authorities there, a United Nations spokesman announced today. They will discuss the question of the Dominican Republic's border with Haiti in the context of current Security Council sanctions against that country.

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The Committee on Information yesterday approved a draft resolution endorsing the continued integration of information centres with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field offices. According to the draft, which was approved without a vote, integration should be carried out on a case-by-case basis, taking the views of host countries into account.

During its final session, the Committee also approved a draft resolution on information in the service of humanity. It would have the General Assembly urge States and organizations to provide support to developing countries and their media. Such support could include the development of human and technical resources and greater access to advanced communications technology available on the open market. A third draft was approved by which the Committee's membership would be increased from 83 to 87, to include Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Kazakhstan.

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A new paradigm for emergency management based on formal partnerships between all sectors of society was the focus of yesterday's first meeting of the Main Committee of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, Japan. Committee Chairman Omar Dario Cardona said government, business and non-governmental organizations had come together in a United Nations forum for the first time to discuss ways to build a "preventive culture" with regard to disasters.

The Director of the WHO's Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action, Fabrizio Bassani, told the Committee that short-term measures did little to solve long-term problems. The current crisis-solving approach to disasters was not sustainable, and money spent on emergency aid was being diverted from disaster preparedness. National capacities must be expanded to deal with disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation, he said.

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The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) today said that recent reports that a sizeable amount of nuclear material was unaccounted for at Japan's Tokai Nuclear Fuel Fabrication Plant were incorrect. The material in

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question was dust which had accumulated in glove boxes at the plant, and was being held in place to minimize the radiation exposure of the staff. It had been duly declared and remained under full safeguards.

The IAEA said that the Tokai Plant had the most advanced nuclear material accounting system in existence, and provided information on the movement and quantities of nuclear material on a timely basis. All nuclear material entering and leaving the facility was measured and verified.

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